

# Poverty in a Changing Climate: Building the Case for Pro-Poor Adaptation

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Climate change is undermining global efforts to eradicate poverty, and is hitting hardest those who have done the least to contribute to the problem. It therefore represents a practical challenge and an issue of global justice.

In response, we need a pro-poor agenda if we want the response to climate change impacts to be effective, efficient and equitable. Moreover, this agenda must recognise that the impacts of climate change and the responses required need to incorporate the differentiated and multidimensional nature of poverty.

## Poverty lenses

Poverty in the context of climate change has tended to be used as a catch-all term, to contrast with richer citizens who are more responsible for causing climate change.

This has been a necessary distinction due to the global nature of climate change discourse, debate and action. Reports from UN agencies, bilateral donors, NGOs, and national governments have consistently made the link between poverty and climate change. But they have failed to recognise the existence of different groups, needs and interests within 'poor people'. We need to acknowledge that poor communities will be affected differently by climate change impacts across societies, and that even within a society there might be groups of poor people facing different circumstances.

This is essential to make adaptation measures effective and efficient as well equitable by responding to the needs of the groups most affected by the impacts of climate change and contributing to efforts to eradicate poverty.

## Pro-poor adaptation

Adaptation options and processes need to be sensitive to the different dimensions of poverty and the way it affected people and communities differently so that they can double as pathways out of poverty for the groups most affected by climate change.

Drawing closer links between climate change adaptation and poverty is essential. The development community can and should bring a wealth of existing knowledge and learning around vulnerability and poverty to those involved in devising processes and options for climate change adaptation. This would ensure that adaptation processes and options are suitable for different circumstances leveraging adaptation processes as potential pathways out of poverty.

'Poverty in a Changing Climate' is a recent *IDS Bulletin* that analyses adaptation in the context of a better understanding and conceptualisation of poverty. It draws closer links between the climate change adaptation and poverty communities of practice. In doing

so, it helps develop an agenda for pro-poor adaptation that promotes greater resilience to climate change as well as climate justice.

The bulletin collates the experiences and knowledge of experts on issues such as chronic and urban poverty, rights, gender, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, micro-finance, micro-insurance, as well as assessing tools climate science, climate risk screening, and participatory video.

The authors pose questions for future research to advance pro-poor adaptation policy and practice, including :

- How can pro-poor adaptation reduce both relative and absolute poverty and vulnerability to climate change?
- How can pro-poor adaptation be differentiated by category of poverty, by marginalised group and by livelihood activity?
- What institutional and legislative frameworks are more likely to deliver pro-poor climate smart development?

These are critical issues for delivering pro-poor adaptation, claiming climate justice and rights, linking adaptation to growth agendas and confronting the challenges of adaptation governance at all scales.

## Footnote:

Tanner, T.M. and Mitchell, T. (eds.) (2008) *Poverty in a Changing Climate. IDS Bulletin* 39.4, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This *IDS Bulletin* was stimulated by the Poverty and Adaptation Research Network, a UK-based network supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), whose support is gratefully acknowledged.



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